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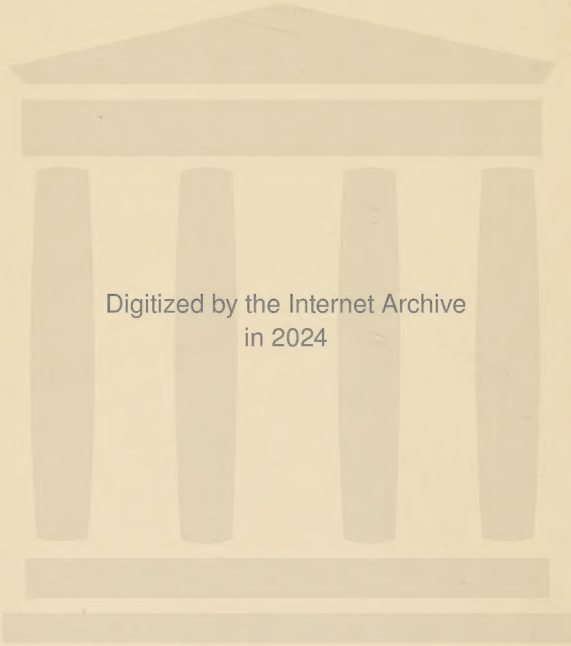
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MINOR PROPHECIES

by

LEE SIMONSON

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(Prof. Chas. Townsend Copeland)
OF HARVARD

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FOREWORD

One of the ironies of nineteenth-century iconoclasm is the eagerness with which it replaced traditional piety toward the Creator of the world with a new piety toward the creators of "Art." Art became either a sacred relic or a living mystery, and communion was laboriously established with a new godhead, Significant Form, in exhibition rooms and museums instead of in churches. The Concrete was excommunicated. To reproduce an object was the new sin. The Abstract and the Absolute, discredited in classrooms, found refuge in art galleries, where they abashed students who had not seen them worshiped elsewhere. And the irrepressible evangelism of American character hailed the coming of New Art as it might have that of a new Messiah. Its hunger fed

upon doctrines as fantastic as those of any sect that once buzzed about the sage of Concord.

Modern champions of the pictorially abstract are already returning to the object, led by the picaresque Picasso himself, as serenely as shepherds might return to their muttons. And those who follow in their wake have, I think, begun to realize that art is neither an exhibition nor a rite, but something as simple as a bell ringing on the neck of a bell-wether, as we, like sheep, nibble our way from the stubble of one century to the pastures of another.

It has always been my belief as a painter and designer that the current attempt to distinguish "pure art" is as ridiculous as the attempt of yesterday to segregate "fine art," and with it the pretension of the painter of easel pictures to the higher caste of "artist." The genetic

process that produced the Elgin marbles or the Parthenon is essentially the same as that which produced Cambodian masks and the tiled minarets of Meknès and Marrakech. Whenever pictorial art has achieved vitality, it has looked upon its work as a job, in the current American sense, and been animated by the specific purpose of housing and adorning human activity: that is, contemporary habits of standing up, sitting down, walking, riding, fighting, dancing, singing, eating, praying, or being buried. The importance of "fine" art has been its relevance as a craft to these habits of any epoch. Beauty is essentially a by-product, the record of that appropriateness, of relevance outlived. Its relevance to us is nothing more than our sensing of its original fitness. And the source of the artist's creativeness, of which so much mystery has been made, is primarily his impulse to share funda-

mental social activities so completely that he could interpret them to themselves. The rest of modern esthetic dogma is, on the whole, mere hocus-pocus with which the artist satisfies his natural vanity and his necessary egoism. And the reluctance of the contemporary modern painter to reconsider his status is due to his having accepted without question, from the seventeenth-century Dutch, the genteel habit of painting easel pictures in gold frames, which in modern society are reduced to the peregrinations of postage stamps.

These papers deal in the main with the problem of exhibiting works of art seen in the light of this credo. The immediate incentive to reprint them was a paragraph that caught my eye in the *New Republic* of September 29, 1926:

A few weeks ago the *New Republic* suggested the desirability of having a scheme established whereby paintings could be rented to the public at low prices and for brief periods of time. Such a plan would enable persons who do not feel they can afford to buy pictures to enjoy contemporary works in a manner not possible by visiting galleries; painters would enjoy some revenue from pictures as yet unsold; and in many cases renters would become attached to a work of art after this, so to speak, trial marriage, and would purchase it. We are now in receipt of additional information regarding the Chicago Galleries Association, referred to . . . as having anticipated this suggestion in some respects.

I remembered having first advocated this alternative in 1917 on facing the agglomeration of modern experiments at the first American exhibition of Independent Artists. I remembered too that even the Metropolitan Museum of New York on opening the American Wing in 1924 had displayed its acquisitions of American Colonial furniture not in gal-

leries, but in rooms that were replicas of the mansions of the period. And the Museum for the Art Institute at Pasadena is planned in pavilions of the same epochs as its collections, grouped about gardens and courtyards, Roman, Chinese, and Spanish—of which I dreamed during the shopkeeper's display of the Morgan collection in 1914.

The changing structure of a few American museums may seem too unimportant to stress again. I venture to think, however, that it is significant as a first step which may eventually make plain to the American public the relation of any art to its age. And any attempt to evolve a new technique of distributing pictures is a first effort to relate modern painting more effectively to the structure of our time. My ideas are nothing more than corks in a current. But that they

continue to bob up again after a decade, is perhaps proof that the current is after all the turn of a tide, strong enough to carry us into new harbors.

L. S.

MINOR PROPHECIES

THE LAND OF SUNDAY AFTERNOON

WHENEVER I enter an art museum, for the first five minutes I see only brown gnomes writhing with the torment of endless confinement, ghosts waving milk-white arms forlornly in a prison. After I recognize them once again as bronzes and marbles I wander to the picture galleries. There I seem to be visiting a stud farm, canvases instead of horses standing in patient rows. All that seems lacking on the brass tag, Whistler 1834-1903, is the addition, "By Velasquez out of Hokusai." One can realize only that painters breed painters and that pictures accumulate. Rooms are crammed with paintings until they become a kaleidoscope. Cases are crowded with objects until the mere process of attention becomes an agony of effort. When a visitor finally succeeds in isolating an ob-

ject he is too worn out to be able to delight in it. Elation is no longer possible. I go to an American museum as a painter, knowing what I wish to see and already familiar with better examples elsewhere, and I come away invariably depressed with the realization that the only goal of art is a spacious and dreary asylum where shelter is piously accorded to waifs and strays. The other stragglers who have come to refresh themselves with beauty seem equally depressed. For in an art museum beauty sleeps in a land where it is always Sunday afternoon.

This practice of unending accumulation, which displays everything and reveals nothing, is the direct result of a policy of mere acquisition, seemingly the only policy our museums are able to conceive. The modern collector hoards what he usually has neither the time to see nor the space to house. On his death the mu-

seum, in the rôle of a benevolent Fafner, provides an appropriate cave in which successive Niebelungen hoards, recovered from a disintegrating past, are accumulated in exactly the piles in which they were originally heaped. Even Alberich set to work hammering and reforging. But our museum directors seem content to remain nothing more than collectors of collectors. Now, when you transfer a private collection to a museum you do nothing more than bring a hermit's pot of gold to the vault of a bank. If it can remain there only as a symbol of wealth, it might as well have remained in its secret cellar. The whole problem is how to set it to work, how to make it create and compound values. Private collecting, which is private hoarding, is a vagary. But public collections, which are only public hoarding, are a social blunder.

By way of continuing it, a monument of accumulation like the Morgan collection is accorded thirteen galleries at the Metropolitan Art Museum because the bulk of it contains so many precious examples of epochs when ornament became little more than ornamentation and which as influences were pernicious—the Augsburg and Nürnberg cups which helped to create the "gingerbread" style of German ornament, until fifteen years ago a fungus-blight on the whole nation; Gobelin tapestries that have consecrated the foolish attempt to make weaving imitate oil painting; Louis XV and XVI furniture that for two centuries made gilt and convolution our notion of grace and elegance; Dresden china mannikins and shepherdesses which until yesterday afflicted our mantels—in short, the historic models of most wedding presents. But even if the collection contained only

its great beauties, the English and Flemish tapestries, the Italian majolica, certain of the Roman and Renaissance bronzes, the Byzantine and Limoges enamels, there is still ten times too much of it, as there is ten times too much of everything in any museum to be experienced.

"It may well be doubted," says the Museum's special catalogue, "whether even Mr. Morgan realized what a bewildering abundance of objects he had accumulated or what a display they were capable of making." I wandered in this bewildering abundance past hundreds of miniatures, I peered into cases displaying thirty-one Chelsea ware snuff-boxes, fifty-six enameled snuff-boxes, eleven enameled umbrella handles, four bishop's crooks, fourteen reliquaries. And when I reached the bowls and ewers of Limousin and Curtois, I recognized dully that they were as miraculously beautiful as

Greek vases. I had become inevitably as listless as any shopper in a huge showroom where nothing is for sale.

You make a crowd, says Degas, with five people, not with twenty. Similarly you make a museum with fifty masterpieces, not with five hundred. If it is a misdemeanor to crowd five Italians into a tenement bedroom, it is criminal to crowd five great works of art into a space where not one can truly live. If a schoolchild must have two hundred forty cubic feet of air in order to breathe, a masterpiece needs five hundred to be seen. The relation of a museum to the objects that compose it is precisely the same as the relation of any artist to the objects he composes. Only ruthless elimination can produce design. The attempt to substitute repetition for selection has given us the modern museum, which records everything and expresses nothing.

There should be a new commandment for museum directors: "When you have enough to fill thirteen galleries, expose as little as you can place in three rooms." For the business of a museum is not to store the past but to restore it, to restore to the scattered fragments of a dismembered age their meaning by restoring their original function, to make them live as they originally lived, part of an act of living, in a temple, a palace, or a cathedral. Imagine, instead of these well-ordered salesrooms, an apse built into a hall, an altar beneath a stained-glass window, the reliquaries, the lamps, and the bishop's crook in their destined places, tapestries hiding the walls. Would there be need of a catalogue to remind us that craftsmanship is the precious bond that unites art to life, and that beauty achieves perfection by serving some other purpose than to display itself? In some fifteenth-

century interior an Augsburg cup near a tiled "Kachelofen" facing a Dürer engraving would fill the place it occupied in its age, as a whimsical toy; its importance would be felt to be its gay triviality, like a moment of laughter in a passion play. If museum directors ceased modeling galleries on the Louvre or the Pitti, royal palaces temporarily without royal tenants, and studied instead those built to express the social purpose of an art museum, as the new museum at Geneva, they would find a series of just such rooms. If we are to see Oriental art, let us see it grouped about some courtyard lined with the tiles now scattered aimlessly over gallery walls, in the secret splendor of a house that turns a blank face to the street, like the heart of an Eastern sage. Renaissance palaces have been carefully reproduced in which to print our newspapers, as in the New York Herald building, or to house our

clubs. It is much more necessary to build one, as Mrs. Gardner has done, to house Italian art. If Italian gardens are appropriate on country estates, there is infinitely greater need for one through which to approach the Italian section of an art museum, where cypresses seemed to hide the distant wind-silver on olive hills, while some fountain, perhaps Verocchio's, topped by a laughing cherub (rescued from a white wilderness of casts), bubbled joy audibly; where Italy lived, though one never entered the door under Andrea Della Robbia's medallions of gay fruit and flowers which now dangle on wires in Gallery Thirteen.

A museum must become, not a permanent exhibition but a permanent exposition, arranged as our expositions are, and pervaded by the same holiday spirit. The center should be a garden where instinctively we would return to dream and

to meditate, where lovers would meet and children play. Though we saw the buildings only in passing or wandered in them for hours, we should feel precisely what we now lose, shuffling through gray galleries: a sense of the benediction of beauty, the knowledge that through the eye we gain peace. And since automobiles and baby-carriages, for reasons only an alderman can understand, have preëminent right to the space of our public parks, let the priceless variations in the color of snuff-boxes, the extra bishop's crooks, the endless assortment of Dresden china, be added to all other necessary accumulations the museum possesses, including the 3,700 musical instruments, and stored with them in well-lighted subterranean galleries. And there the critic, the historian, and the high-school teacher followed by patient droves learning to appreciate art, might amble happily.

1914.

PRINTS AND A FRAME OF MIND

CATHERINE: What is our business today?
NARYSHKIN: The new museum, Little Mother. But the model will not be ready until tonight.
CATHERINE: Yes, the museum. An enlightened capital should have a museum. I must have specimens, specimens, specimens, specimens.—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, *The Great Catherine.*

HOW TRUE a picture this may be of the founding of museums in Russia historians can dispute with Shaw. But it is a vividly accurate picture of how museums must inevitably be founded in any community determined to have artistic taste and without a rich artistic heritage, notably the United States.

In Europe even minor museums have an essential and intimate relation to the life of their communities, for they are a community's visible memory of itself. As ancestral beauties are menaced there is a desire to conserve them, as instinctive as your desire to keep a photograph of your

mother when a girl. The weather-beaten carvings on the cathedral begin to crumble, the altar paintings become blackened by incessant candle smoke, and a museum grows to preserve them. The pikes and halberds which created Swiss independence are themselves objects of art; and the blue and white legends on the tiled hearths which successive generations of warriors saved, the museums at Zurich or Geneva save again. Even the Louvre is not an art museum only, but a monument to the glory of France, a record not of art alone but of conquest. Its gallery of Rubens celebrates Henry of Navarre and his white plume, the Salon Carré is a reminder of "la gloire de l'Empereur" who could exact from Italy some of her greatest masterpieces. You feel that even Sunday strollers are moved by the thought. They never forget, I feel certain, that the emperor's crown is only a

few rooms away. When the Louvre cannot awaken their love of beauty, it revives their love of France. Its relation to them is a warm, human thing able to minister to them without exacting more knowledge or taste than they happen to possess.

But in America the art museum can be only an art museum, and you go not to realize America but to learn of every corner of the world that America has ransacked for specimens, typical specimens, great specimens, beautiful specimens, rare specimens, the best specimens money could buy. You go only to see art, reluctantly—though you may not admit it—to the weary business of understanding art by staring at it piecemeal, art which stares at you through a thousand masks, persistently reminding you that they have been brought together for no other purpose than that you should

understand them. Millions have been spent, lives have been given, uniquely for you and your growing understanding. And you go finally perhaps to see the Riggs collection of armor, with a sudden conviction that you ought to know more about art, akin to the sudden helpless conviction that you ought to do something for the poor, when, impulsively, you mail a check to some charity.

Such is the American art museum, originally an unpretentious brick building founded at a time when only kindly and far-sighted cranks thought of art at all, now transformed into a Corinthian palace of many wings, admonishing us that art is with us.

The Boston Art Museum recently opened its new wing, doubling its size, but the occasion has greater significance. For the first time an American museum has looked not only at itself but over its

shoulder at the public who must be made to need it, and has achieved a radical reorganization of its methods. A Renoir, a Monet, and a Chavannes, lost as usual on overcrowded walls of marble and damask, were lent for the occasion. But the occasion is made memorable not by particular masterpieces but by one masterpiece of arrangement: the prints under Mr. Fitzroy Carrington.

"Humanizing an art museum," is his phrase. "Of course," he added, "a print department at best is a minor department. It can never contain a museum's greatest treasures. But it can come closer to life." And the department does, because Mr. Carrington possesses not only the necessary psychological insight, but a rare type of executive imagination as well.

The first problem, as Mr. Carrington sees it, is the problem of presentation. A

curator with his material (I am paraphrasing a morning's talk with him) is in the position of a manager with a newly accepted play. He must stage it. The psychology of attention is preliminary to the psychology of appreciation. The problem is how to secure the sort of attention that ripens naturally into interest and enthusiasm, and the first concern is the setting, for there is a physical limit to what the eye can take in. "Put too many etchings on a wall and they become so many postage stamps." What frames a picture is not its frame but its relation to the wall space that bounds it. When will curators of paintings realize that all pictures are subject to the same law?

You may have wondered why plaster casts of the Venus of Milos are so omnipresent in the world, until you remember that the statue is shown in a room alone. So Mr. Carrington, given two large

rooms, divided the space into six, none larger than the ordinary living-room of a private house, compact in two adjoining rows of three with a larger room across the end. The whole group is no larger than a small flat. There is rarely more than a single row of prints, and as few as possible on each wall, every wall being broken into smaller units by a door, with the result that each room contains so little that you grasp it as a unit.

Piranesi's engravings of Rome strung along the entrance hall lead you, like an overture to an opera, into the first room of engraved and etched portraits, which embodies part of Senator Sumner's collection of prints with which the department was founded. "They represent," Mr. Carrington remarked, "what Sumner would have done today with greater opportunities." Observe this first departure from traditional museum policy: a

donor's gift is not enshrined, his intentions are realized. The room of contemporary etchings institutes a more revolutionary departure. With Brangwyn, Zorn, Lepère and Steinlen are hung unknown younger men. Mr. Carrington knew nothing more of them than these single prints, but he hung them to let the public know of a new man and to "size him up," whether or not the dealers thought him worth patronizing. Compare this with the traditional museum policy of stamping only established reputations with official approval, and hanging them, eternally unchallenged, occasionally long after they are obsolete.

A room containing Meryon's etchings of Paris, from whom the cult of picturesque Paris dates, adjoins the men of 1830, his contemporaries. From Turner's mezzotints you enter a room of Dürer's wood engravings illustrating the life of the

Virgin, and from one corner, before his "Flight into Egypt," through the door leading into the last little gallery devoted to his predecessor, you see Schongauer's etching of the same subject almost identical in composition. You observe the formative influence at a glance, and have instinctively realized the meaning of comparative criticism.

If nothing you have yet seen interests you, it is a step into the enormous library of prints where you may browse for hours over other original Dürers and Rembrandts. There are facsimiles of all prints not owned in original, and a growing file of modern magazine and book illustrations which will presently be as complete. In the basement below are two presses, one for etchings, the other for woodcuts, where the co-director of the department, an expert in the technique of printing, has office hours twice a week and will aid

any one in pulling off experimental proofs.

You have strolled through these rooms as pleasantly as through the rooms of a friend, and realized a short history of etching and engraving with as little fatigue as if you had taken down a few books from his shelves. And as the exhibit in one room is changed, on an average every three weeks, you are tempted back as naturally as you are to a succession of "one-man shows." Prints have been humanized because they have been related to your needs and mine, alike to the connoisseur's who comes to compare a rare proof of a Meryon with one he owns, and to the embryonic collector's, eager to find younger men he can afford to buy. The department reaches not only the etcher with his own press but the beginner without one, not only the painter but the

illustrator forming his style, and eager to see Charles Dana Gibson in a recent number of Life, as well as Charles Keene in an early number of Punch.

Etching became more real to me than it had been since a summer afternoon seven years ago, when I sat beside a country road, my burin a needle stuck into the end of a lead pencil, scratching the outlines of Marsden Hartley's cabin on my first plate. It was "bitten" in front of the barn with a chicken's feather to spread the acid, while a bottle of hydrochloric fumed in the shade of an elm, and hens skipped about it restlessly, like tourists at the edge of a volcano. I wanted to etch again more keenly than I wanted to see the other Dürers in the library, and I regretted returning to a city where, although Dürers are exhibited, presses for one's own experiments are less accessible.

With me, as with any one, Mr. Carrington had accomplished his purpose. He had not only shown me art, he had brought me back to life again, even to my own.

1915.

HISTORIC IMPRESSIONISM

IMPRESSIONIST painting has been recently belittled as a succession of "gossipy notes" that "no longer appeal because 'impressionist' statesman, churchman and play producer" are little more than gossips catering to our newfound interest in the ephemeral. Essential form and line have never been lost in impressionistic painting as easily as essential characteristics can be lost in such impressionistic criticism, which insistently blurs together every activity of an epoch into a vibrating atmosphere of unrest.

Painting the ephemeral is one matter, painting it in an ephemeral manner another; and Monet's insistence on atmosphere is no more ephemeral than Turner's or Whistler's. For they knew as well as he that nature is much less respectful of her precise forms and contours than the well-trained painter, and swallows them on all

occasions as impiously as Chronos did his children. Turner caught her at it at sunrise and sunset, and created the first scandal of modern art; Whistler another when he discovered that "the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry as with a veil," and produced his nocturnes. But Monet's landscapes seemed even more preposterously vague because he was the first to see that poplars and hills could be poetically lost in veils of atmosphere at two o'clock of a glaring summer afternoon. An incredulous public gaped at them for ten years before it decided that any one could see a landscape impressionistically, by half closing his eyes. Since then impressionist landscapes have been very current indeed.

Degas' laundresses, his jockeys and his ballet-dancers are "gossipy" in exactly the sense that Daumier's lawyers and wash-women are gossipy; that is they do not represent Arcadian goddesses stand-

ing firmly planted on both feet and holding golden apples presumably through all eternity. They are drawn "with sensitive feeling for the fluid pose of the body" which is the common quality of all great draughtsmanship, from the Chinese masters in the Sung dynasty of the eleventh century to Ingres of the nineteenth, and they are animated by the same ancient sensitiveness to the passing moment which animates Hokusai's sketch-books, and makes the characteristic attitudes of apes, wriggling babies, leaping acrobats, birds, fishes and flying kites—all ephemeral moments in experience—permanent moments in art.

To be sure, the faces of Degas' laundresses are "free from sentiment," and we can now find traces of sentiment in the blurred features of Millet's "Gleaners" and "Sower." But Degas, like Millet, being primarily an artist interested in arousing emotion by a synthetic render-

ing of form, and not an illustrator achieving an effect by reproducing the pantomime of emotions themselves, was concerned primarily "with the hitherto unobserved interest of a characteristic attitude." So Millet's contemporaries before the "Man with the Hoe" complained, "Once again you recognize the same idiot," and found his three gleaners "three scarecrows of poverty planted in a field, and like scarecrows, they have no faces." But after having been an artistic tradition for twenty years, Millet's peasants in due course became a literary tradition and it is plausible now to find them statuesque. The laundresses will presently undergo the same process of literary beatification, and it will then seem plausible to think of them leaning heavily on their irons as on a hoe, brutalized by contact with the ironing board as inevitably if not as

majestically as peasants are by contact with the soil.

The impressionists were modern precisely as all other creative artists have been modern in their epoch, that is to say, they took their material as a matter of course from almost any and every aspect of the life of their time. They have painted women and children on the seashore like Utamaro, demi-mondaines in cafés as Carpaccio did his "Courtesans on a Balcony," the frills of the Ballerina instead of the hoops of the Infanta, smart Parisiennes instead of smart Venétiennes, and occasionally, like Veronese, they are as interested in their puppies as he was in the dog, heels in air, among the wine jars of the "Marriage at Cana."

The fundamental passions are usually to be found in second-rate painters, great ones having an obstinate preoccupation, like the impressionists, with such ephem-

eral matters as characteristic attitudes, pitch and color of shadows, vibration of light, atmosphere, and the fluid pose of body. The faces of Meissonier's cuirassiers in "Friedland, 1807" are puffed with the passions of loyalty, enthusiasm, victory, and courage, but not Dürer's and Uccello's warriors or the Attic boys who still ride their ponies on the metopes of the Parthenon. Constant's harem writhes on a marble floor a prey to the fundamental passions of love, hate, revenge and lust, but not Manet's Olympia on her couch opposite. Only her black cat is humped by any fundamental emotion. Olympia is as calm as Tintoretto's Susanne and Rembrandt's Bathsheba. The faces of the disciples at Emmaus are lost in gloom, that seventeenth-century substitute for "atmosphere" on which Rembrandt so often insisted, but they have endured like the fantastic Chinese moun-

ains, although the form and contour of heir bases are lost in blank silk.

Impressionism, like every historic school of painting, is incessantly preoccupied with form. Its critics might have learned its message from Cézanne's historic dictum, "One must not say model but modulate; when color is at its richest, form is at its fullest." And Renoir, with Cézanne the dominant figure of the impressionist movement, achieved a synthesis of form in light as final as Cézanne's. Any one who has seen Renoir's prodigious array of life-size portraits and nudes even in photographs, and then classes them among the "gossipy notes" of an epoch, proves simply that he has still to serve his apprenticeship in the appreciation of pictorial pattern. Having seen any one of the baigneuses—and Renoir is as prolific as Rubens—he will understand George Moore's memory of them: "Renoir has

modeled whole bodies of women in the light, and the light is not only on the surface, apparently; it is under the surface." Renoir modeled seemingly with light. His baigneuses are clothed in its iridescence, with palpitating color strokes, as a bird's breast with down, their bodies are as soft and firm as the bodies of birds, and yet these slightly plump girls are as monumental as statues. And when Renoir, who, like Degas, composes every canvas, whether it contains a handful of fruit or single figure, undertook "compositions," one has to go back to Rubens' "Nymphs and Satyrs," or Titian's "Diana and Acteon" at the Prado, to match the exuberance and opulence of Renoir's rhythmic linking of human forms in three girls splashing water at each other by a river (the "Baigneuses" of 1885).

The "broken tones of a spectrum palette" were never consistently carried

through a single canvas by Renoir, Degas, or, for that matter, Monet. Degas suffused his dressing-rooms and stages, half lit during an afternoon rehearsal, with a light as ambient and as subtly iridescent as Renoir had made the light of out-of-doors, but no richer in actual color than the pearl and violet lining of a shell. It was Signac who berated Monet for his general muddiness and his slovenly disregard of the primary purity of color as revealed by Chevreuil, and proceeded with Seurat and Cross to a thoroughgoing application of Chevreuil's principles. The result was not a clarified impressionism but the end of it, the total destruction of light in canvases so unreal in light, so rigid in pattern, so decoratively flat in form that they became the color quarry for the post-impressionist movement. A younger generation had only to obliterate the divisions between the broken patches

of color which gave these landscapes a meaningless air of facsimiles of mosaics, and they had the vermilion and ultramarine outlines, the pea-green shadows and the large blocks of color sequences, which have become the current formula of post-impressionism. For if we attempt the history of impressionism we must remember that post-impressionism was born of what impressionism had ignored, and only fought it as a conscious reaction afterward.

But the gates of the beautiful have opened long since to the boulevards extérieurs and we live in a larger heaven of immortals, where cocottes will sip absinthe as long as the gods of Poussin drink nectar, Renoir's children share with other graces a sunnier immortality, and Degas' dancers stand forever, though they stand on one leg and not on two.

1915.

PANIC IN ART

ONCE A YEAR for the last six years art has been reborn, and named successively: Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Orphism, Synchronism, and Vorticism. And each conception is assumed to have the finality of a miracle. In the uproar of rival christenings the accredited Cubist pamphleteer announced, "Cubism is painting Itself." The Futurist manifesto proclaims, "We inaugurate a new epoch of painting." A Synchronist confided to me, "Ours is the last painters' movement; there can be no other." One conviction, however, they hold in common: art, which has been the courtesan of princes and the holiday playmate of republics, is dead. Painting, which began with Giotto, has completed its cycle, and a new art made possible by a new freedom is to begin.

We are faced with it: the freedom to

paint hair green, thighs blue, and tables out of perspective; the further freedom to dismember any object and scatter its parts in dynamic rhythm; the ultimate right to evolve whirlpools of color splashed by flaming pinwheels in which the last traces of the object are calcinated. The critic attempts to bully the painter by declaring this stuff is not worth understanding. The painter promptly intimidates the critic by declaring that this is beauty too new and too strange for him to see.

Now it is essential to realize that not even the maddest of modern convases is a hoax nor the strangest a mystery. For in this new movement there is nothing mysterious we need approach with awe. Nothing is hidden except its motives. It is not primarily a reaction against the realism of Courbet or the impressionism of Monet. The energy that animates it

is nothing so trivial as a desire to scandalize the pontiffs of academic art. The new in recent art is the expression of two impulses: the first a panic-stricken attempt (Post-Impressionism) to recover our lost innocence of the eye, the second (Cubism, Futurism, etc.) a frantic endeavor to achieve forms so pure and beauty so abstract that they would be a new absolute. Both are ineffectual and both are significant because they are phases of an inevitable revolt against an unavoidable eclecticism growing every year more intolerable to the artist.

For the compilation of art history has grown so complete that no one can escape it. The process of enthusiastic allegiance to some historic type of beauty by which the artist educates his sense of design and form, becomes an immense critical labor. Instead of an immediate native tradition there is a bewildering array of historic

tradition to choose from. The sculptor, for instance, not only compares Greek statues with Egyptian, and Hindu bronzes with Chinese monuments, but he must compare Phidian marbles with archaic Attic bas-reliefs, and later Egyptian monoliths with examples of the first dynasties. He cannot take Greek art in general, or any other art, as his model; his knowledge of it is already too complete. Forty years ago the mere sight of the first Japanese prints to reach Europe determined Whistler's sense of composition, Van Gogh's draughtmanship, Monet's secession from the Barbizon School. But already the painter knows that Hokusai and Hiroshige are decadent and merely popular illustrators to the Japanese themselves, and that if he wishes to school himself in Oriental art he had better learn to appreciate Harunobu or the Chinese landscape paintings

of the Sung period, unless he finds that the Orient after all reached a more complete expression in Rajput miniatures. The creative energy of our time is not only exhausted by enthusiastic erudition, but our power of appreciation is itself drained by incessant criticism, the necessity for a continual revaluation of all esthetic values before we can achieve any esthetic criterion whatsoever.

Is it surprising that painters and sculptors ended with a forlorn sense of the wisdom of ignorance, that, utterly weary of the burden of sophistication, their only ultimate enthusiasm should be for every primitive period of art in which they could regain a sense of seeing with the uneducated gaze of the savage and the childlike eye? There followed ten or fifteen years in which every type of primitive simplicity was revived: the simplification of drawing, the distortion of the

nude, the color schemes of pure reds, blues and yellows which raised shrieks of protest. The sculptor discovered negro wood-carvings of the African coast and "went in" for a barbaric feeling for form. Portraits were painted which had the ponderous strength of Byzantine mosaics, every feature heavily outlined in black. Landscapes became patterns as simple and direct as Persian tiles.

As in all revivals, much was recovered that was permanently valuable. Color achieved a new splendor. Painting acquired an intrinsic beauty of material, a sheer loveliness of texture, as of lusterless enamel or Italian majolica. Our sense of decoration was reborn. For any canvas of Matisse more genuinely ornaments a wall than a mural painting by Chavannes. All the elements for the making of a great tradition of mural painting were resurrected, but painting was too irretrievably

obsessed with its search for salvation to use them. The nostalgia of eclecticism remained, while the conviction grew more and more irresistible that everything had been done and there was no use doing it over again. The ingenuity of the artist was finally browbeaten. The visible world was no longer real to him. Significantly enough, Picasso, collector of death-masks and totem-poles, was the first to emancipate himself from the object.

So we have had the rise of five or six "Damn-the-Object" schools. The artists proclaim, "The mission of the artist is to divest objects of their banal appearance and to fashion the real image of the spirit." The painter is to search for "the plastic essence of the world," tending to express itself as "a colored mathematics of things." Observe the absolutist's contempt for the merely phenomenal world. Objects are appearances, thin and unreal

things. Vision is only a form of illusion; reality is elsewhere. The artist pondering on the nature of his art begins to reflect on the nature of reality. And with phenomenal ingenuity he creates fantastic systems of graphic symbols to express naïve systems of metaphysics. The cubists are particularly pre-occupied with the nature of space and volume, and though they insist that "pictorial space" is "non-euclidian," they express their conviction in canvasses full of cones, cylinders and cubes. The futurist parodies Democritus: "Our bodies enter into the canopies on which we sit, the couches enter into our bodies, the autobus hurls itself into the houses it passes, the houses hurl themselves upon the autobus and merge with it."

The second revolution, like the first, ends in the past. The revolutionary painter, seeking the most uniquely modern goal he can imagine, has fallen victim

to an ancient hunger—a poetic impatience to rend the veil of appearance, a poignant eagerness to be one with the hidden essence of being. He has expressed again his own weariness, a desire to lose himself in a world his eye can no longer dominate or understand. The latest pamphlet calls this "The Art of Spiritual Harmony." It is an essentially medieval conception of the relation of man to his universe. It is a scholastic's answer to the problem, though the middle ages did not attempt to delineate it in paint. The cubist and the futurist are at best modern monks illuminating with fantastic grotesques the margin of an esoteric manuscript. And if certain of their canvases of triangles and circles seem like cabalistic signs, it is because, like Faust, they are calling up the Earth-Spirit.

Yet there is no need of complaining with Cox that painting is going to the dogs,

or of whimpering with all the instructors that art is dead. Whatever you may mean by death, be certain of one thing: Art may die innumerable deaths, if that is the metaphor you choose to adopt. It will not stop. The twin impulse to ornament and to play is an eternal passion. This kneading, thumping, hammering, cutting and smearing of materials into shapes and patterns is an incessant energy, and the habit of making easel pictures is only one of its phases. For the moment, painting is sealed in a test-tube of esthetic experiment where form and color gleam and float in fiery disintegration.

1914.

THE PAINTER'S ARK[1]

I

A GROUP of democrats might plausibly maintain that no form of representation existed which did not suppress a minority, and then summon a parliament where any one might become a deputy upon payment of two dollars. As politicians they might pretend to elicit the voice of the people. In practice they know that any such mob must remain inarticulate. Any such assembly would be nothing more than a scheme giving a few radicals liberty to orate from a rostrum, whereas, otherwise, they might have to harangue from a street corner. In much the same way any society of painters which dispenses with a jury and sells space at an annual exhibition indiscriminately to the first thousand applicants, is necessarily disingenuous. It

[1] The first Exhibition of The Society of Independent Artists, New York, April, 1917.

must pretend to be as eager to rescue the unknown genius. Its program must embrace democracy as a principle when, in reality, democracy is adopted as an expedient. It is the amateur, the superannuated drawing teacher and the occasional member of an academy who are the democrats of any independent salon. They may feel that in exhibiting with the wild young modern they acknowledge him as a brother. But the young modern, as a rule, considers himself one of the two or three genuinely creative artists of the community. There are perhaps a dozen other painters whose work he finds more or less interesting. The rest he would exterminate like flies were he able. He is eager to expose with the old school in order to "show them up" and chuckles at the prospect.

An exhibition of this sort has its importance for the critic as an annual fair

containing a few freaks. But the gayety and the tingling expectation which animated the long white tent of the Salon des Indépendents early each spring on the quais of the Seine, were absent from the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists at the Grand Central Palace. For in America it is no longer possible for any painter to be a revolutionary. He is given the same right to experiment accorded the biologist. Let him proclaim the creation of a new type of form palpitating with strange adhesions of color; he attracts the same attention as though he announced that he had kept a dog's heart alive in a jar. The relevance of neither is quite clear to the public. But both are greeted as amazing and peculiarly modern miracles. Any young painter today who claims that a lonely jury meeting in solemn conclave once or twice a year prevents him from

gaining a public, seems as silly as a chemist complaining that a cardinal has placed his monograph on the Index. As the recent Independent exhibition emphatically proved, the only moderns who have been ignored are a few plodding disciples of Cézanne. But the abstract canvases, the portrait head of galvanized wire, the paintings on plate glass into which brass coils are riveted, have already been exhibited or offered for sale by picture dealers whose annual rental should be a sufficient guarantee of their sincerity.

The creeds of our academies are as completely discredited as any theology, their dogmas preserved, if at all, only when they happen to be literature. Painters are no longer faced with the alternative of going backwoods with the native American school or to Rome with the American Academy. To the vast public which has seen recent loan exhibitions

of Cézanne, Lautrec and Van Gogh, Kenyon Cox's picture of "the ugliness, the eccentricity and the moral dinginess into which they were betrayed" resounds emptily; his volume "Artist and Public" seems the sermon of an angry priest describing the ways of sin, the temptations of the devil and the rewards of saints. To the younger generation of painters, his reminder that all those who follow the tradition of Raphael and Veronese will eventually be rewarded with a commission to decorate a public building, is as potent as though he had assured them that if they were good they would go to heaven.

Modern painting has won its charter of freedom. Every successive privilege it demands is automatically granted. Everything may be tried and every picture is a possible experience. The quarrel as to esthetic values cannot again become a ro-

mantic drama of tyranny and oppression, heresy and martyrdom. You may start a school of painting with no more ado than if you opened the local branch of an ethical society. You will not have to defend yourself from persecution. You will merely have to explain your doctrines at some length to the collectors in the catalogue of your first exhibition and eventually to the Russians, the Greeks, the Lithuanians, or the native Irish who will invite you to lecture at their guild or their parish house. Before me as I write is a postcard from the People's Art Guild announcing two such lectures next Sunday, and three exhibitions, two at settlement houses and the third at a public library.

So it is that the first exhibition of the Independent Artists of America seems less an assembly where the manifestoes of freedom may be heard than a modern ark, towed suddenly into the busy traffic

of a harbor. Two thousand pictures have been welcomed with the proverbial benevolence of Noah and housed in alphabetical order. But we have seen them all before, purring domestically on our walls, groomed in the stalls of private collections, or, exotic beasts, roaring genially at art dealers. Not one of them is menaced with extinction. An asylum has been given them where they may take refuge from the waters of wrath which have never risen.

II

OUR emancipation has been as swift as it has been complete. Before the Armory Exhibition of 1913, the existence of painting modern in a different sense than Manet's or Monet's was a rumor. Names such as Cézanne, Gauguin, Picasso and Van Gogh, were shadowy deities of an alien legend. Our critics abroad seemingly

had never penetrated Pellerin's mansion or Leo Stein's apartment, of a Saturday evening, in the Rue de Fleurus. If any did, they printed no record of their adventures. At Stieglitz's pioneer gallery, "291," Hartley's and Marin's landscapes, Matisse's drawings and Cézanne's water colors were seen, misunderstood and generally ignored. But no sooner had Arthur B. Davies revealed on a larger scale, at an armory, the development of modern painting from Ingres to Matisse, than the magnitude of what we had ignored overwhelmed us. The insularity of our critics and our museums was destroyed at a blow. Are we not the most progressive nation upon earth? We had only to be shown authoritatively what modern art was in order to revere it whole-heartedly. Within a year we disarmed the revolution by domesticating it. The importance of schools of painting which in Europe had

only begun to be generally recognized we accepted as a fact. The apologists could not thunder; they were forced to explain to group upon group eager to be converted. One confession is typical of many. "I had come to appreciate," wrote one painter a year later. "My eyes were opened and I saw clearly up the new avenues of thought." Of the dinginess of our native palette we had grown wearier than we were aware. It seemed a dreary memory, like wall paper roses to an imaginary invalid who has suddenly roused himself and walked into a garden of flaming flowers.

In official quarters the symptoms of conversion were immediate. The Metropolitan Museum eagerly acquired the only available Cézanne,—as it happened, a thoroughly inadequate example. Painters hitherto unrecognized, such as McFee, Burlin, Marin, and Zorach, were invited

to the San Francisco exhibition. The picture dealers opened their doors to the "new movement." Montross's galleries, formerly the shrine of purest sentimentality and the gentilities of the Massachusetts school, inaugurated several exhibitions of the new movement led by Mr. Davies himself, whose lyric and literary daydreams became suddenly rigid with geometric forms. Mr. Daniels undertook the historic rôle of Durand-Ruel to another group of American painters and staked his career on theirs. Elsewhere group exhibitions which reflected every phase of Cubism, Futurism, or Synchronism became as much part of a winter's routine as a season of French and Italian opera. There are at present two modern galleries on Fifth Avenue, one guaranteeing the market value and the art value of all its paintings.

Now a picture dealer is precisely in the

position of a theatrical manager. He must show on the whole what he expects to sell. If Mr. Belasco were to announce Tcekov's "Cherry Orchard" the significance of the event would lie not in Mr. Belasco's opinion of the play but in his willingness to risk its performance. It is equally irrelevant whether Mr. Montross recorded a new-found enthusiasm or displayed the astuteness of a broker. Just as the goal of modern drama is to outgrow stage societies and become the commercial staple of Broadway, so modern painting in seeking free development must, in a sense, become commercialized, find agents who offer it for sale and will advertise it when necessary.

A picture exhibition is itself a salesroom disguised as a spectacle. And the growing resentment against the juries of our academies has been not so much fear of the discredited prestige which their

prizes might give a picture, but anger at their power to bar young painters from the largest public picture market which existed. The Society of Independent Artists is attempting to create a larger and more popular annual market. Herein lies the appeal of the Society which on payment of five dollars will hang two of your pictures or place two pieces of your sculpture for one month of every year under the letter of the alphabet into which you happen to have been born. Such an opportunity may be essential to many painters scattered in cities that are not art centers, further West or South, isolated in rural communities, unable to meet a cosmopolitan group who might welcome their work. Modern groups themselves tend to become sects, and are too often collections of artistic snobs as astutely exclusive as a set of society women, in perpetual fear of being compromised by the

presence among themselves of some intruder who does not live on their esthetic level. And dealers, precisely because they exploit modernity, are prone to ignore work too subtle, too naïve, or too indigenous to be readily recognized as modern under one or another of the timely labels. For these painters, if they exist in sufficient numbers, the Independent Exhibition exists. Like a fair in the streets of a medieval city where any one for miles around might bring his native handicraft and set up his own booth, it seems a clumsy and primitive expedient, but perhaps a necessary survival, such as the weekly markets in the streets in Paris where any neighboring farmer can offer you his radishes, his cabbages, or his hens. Only the presence of enough painters working outside our cosmopolitan walls can justify an Independent Salon today, not the presence of Matisse, Delaunay,

Signac, Picasso, Glackens, Hartley or Man Ray, who can be seen or bought elsewhere.

But with every year the practice of selling paintings is becoming more difficult because more of an anachronism, a consequence of the painter's anomalous attempt still to exist on the Renaissance basis of patron and servant. A few princes and cardinals bent on decorating their palaces have been supplanted by a few millionaires to whom pictures are a hobby and a heterogeneous bourgeoisie for whom pictures are a part of their furniture. The millionaire can afford to hang more pictures than he can actually live with, just as his racing stable may contain more horses than he can ride. But the bourgeoisie, moving from one apartment to another, from hotels in winter to country houses during the summer, from houses to apartments and back

again, are a migratory class and cannot encumber themselves with collections of paintings. To insist that they ought to buy them is as futile as to insist that they must own every dwelling they inhabit. Until they can have pictures on the same terms as they have their houses or their flats, they will, as a class, do without them. The picture market will remain limited to those who own mansions, in the main a conservative class, patronizing the established painter rather than the innovator.

The alternative is of course to rent pictures rather than to sell them. In no other way can a class of picture owners, in an industrial community, be encouraged to keep pace with the production of new schools. For, to hang an example of Cubism on one's walls, or a still-life in the manner of Cézanne, is, for almost every one, an experiment. The certainty even

for a collector, that the picture which he likes today, he will enjoy five years hence, is an expert sense acquired usually only after years of systematic collecting and many failures. And every one who has grown tired of his wall-paper, his furniture or his book-plate, hesitates to venture an initial investment of two or three hundred dollars when a modern picture at an exhibition arouses his enthusiasm. It is idle to expect the public as a whole to acquire new experiences at a cost which penalizes their willingness to experiment.

The necessity for renting pictures was first made plain to me when a friend, who had leased a cottage near the seashore, finding the white walls unpleasantly bare, asked me to rent him four pastels of flowers I had just completed. Unfortunately the cost of framing and shipping them exceeded any rental I might have asked and the inauguration of an historic

experiment was deferred. But imagine a physician whose photograph of Corot's "Lac d'Avray" has begun to bore him; whose Japanese color prints as well have seemed suddenly rigid and flat. And these "young fellows" attract him for the first time at an Independents' exhibition where pictures can be hired. He steps to the desk and rents a Portuguese monastery by Halpert and an acrobat by Demuth, in order to discover whether they continue to interest him more than a photograph of Corot. A brewer who moved from a hotel to his country estate every June might conceivably enjoy pictures, a still-life by Hassam perhaps, as he enjoys his garden, until the frost. May not some elderly lawyer prefer to look at Glackens' "Beach at Bellport" for a winter rather than renew his two subscription seats for the opera? At the end of the winter he might reluctantly sell a bond rather than

part with the picture. The third summer, after renting other painters, the brewer might find that he wanted a Hassam every summer. The physician might have discovered capacities for emotion within himself he never suspected and return for a symbolic arrangement by Hartley or Mr. Stella's synthesis of Coney Island. In every case, and there are a thousand such possibilities, a collector has been encouraged to develop until he is more certain of his taste and prefers to buy outright.

The established painter might profit in recruiting his public outside of the few museums and collectors who are soon stocked up with examples of his work. As for the younger painter, the more frequently his pictures were returned, the better. More people in widely different circles would have seen them and disputed their values. His work would be not before the public but among the public.

He would depend less upon a single "one-man show" and scattered press notices. Twenty pictures a year, ready to rent, implies no extraordinary fecundity. Could any such painter keep them in circulation at even five dollars per month for each, his assured income would be twelve hundred dollars, enough to exist upon, while he clung to his principles without the necessity of compromise until his growing reputation assured him adequate prices.

As an attempt to promote sales of modern art the Independents' exhibition is no more effective than any other. But as an agency for every painter who wishes to rent his work, it might become a vital factor in contemporary art. The slogan, "No jury, no prizes," is obsolete. But under the placard, "Pictures for rent, none for sale," there would be no need to advertise in the theatrical column of

the newspapers an "art event extraordinary." We should find congregating annually about the Independents, the animated crowds we have not seen.

III

IT is a question whether the large annual exhibition, whatever its character, is not becoming obsolete. A Salon becomes futile primarily because it is a Salon, because paintings whether good or bad, routine or unique cannot be seen or assimilated in quantities of a thousand. Though half of them were masterpieces they could not be adequately experienced. But the myth of the average spectator, like the myth of the economic man, persists. He is supposed to walk past a mile or two of pictures, examine each with unflagging interest, remember Nos. 462 and 830 vividly, and even determine to purchase No. 1029. In reality his eye is

distracted, his power of attention deadened, such latent capacity for delight as he possesses untouched. And having paid the price of admission, he is driven to hurry past everything in order to see the two thousand exhibits in his allotted half hour. He becomes the tourist, his catalogue replacing his guide book, eager not to see but to have seen. And he will become more jaded at the Salon than he habitually is even in the Louvre or the Uffizi because modern pictures tend less and less to stress their illustrative content, and so surrender any meaning less readily to the casual eye.

In point of fact the battles which have won public support for the successive phases of modern painting have taken place not in Salons but in smaller galleries where the cumulative effect of one painter's work or the work of a group could become plain. The history of mod-

ern art could be written as record of small exhibitions. Courbet, Manet, Degas and Renoir were accepted by the Salons of their day with more or less regularity, and nevertheless found the Salon inadequate for their purposes and unprofitable. Courbet, despite the seven canvases accepted by the Salon of 1849, established his dominance and made his significance unmistakable in 1855 by hiring a lot at two thousand francs a month, erecting a shack and nailing a placard above the entrance: "Realism: Exposition of 40 pictures by Gustave Courbet." Manet, although the Salon hung his Olympia in 1863, felt the need of exhibiting fourteen canvases at Martinet's shop on the Boulevard des Italians; and in 1867, emulating Courbet, also rented a lot and erected a shed in order, as he himself said in his catalogue, "to put the whole of his work before the public." Degas abandoned the

Salon, after joining the first impressionist exhibit in 1870, and Renoir likewise, after having the opportunity in 1883 of exhibiting seventy works at Durand-Ruel's new quarters on the Boulevard de la Madeleine. More recently, Picasso, who dominated every experiment to create nonrepresentative art in Paris, exhibited nowhere, not even at the Salon des Indépendents. And the recognition and the influence of cubism as a movement is largely due to the fact that the cubists exhibited as a unit in a single room when first admitted to the Salon d'Automne.

If the annual Independent salon is not to become obsolete, it must build about the group as a unit, not destroy it; become a federation of small exhibitions, not a democratic mob. Robert Henri outlined such a scheme three years ago in *Arts and Decoration*. Its basis was an exhibition building, open continuously

from November until June, containing six galleries, each capable of holding sixty pictures on the line, each gallery to be filled for one month of the season by a group of not less than seven nor more than twelve painters, "self-organized and self-judging." The single duty of the officers of the association is to allot the galleries to every group of painters applying for space, with no right to discriminate against any group or interfere with whatever they chose to exhibit. If young painters are too eager to gain prestige by exhibiting with Glackens, Bellows, or Henri, if there are too many uniform displays of the pupils of our popular instructors, and the immature uncertainties of all our art students, even this type of exhibition will fail. But if this country cannot produce enough vital, autonomous and intelligent groups of painters, modern art will have failed to take a place

in American life. Meanwhile the type of annual exhibition which Mr. Henri proposes at least attempts to solve the problem of exhibiting paintings, instead of evading it, creates democracy among painters which is effective, not formal. Limit the size of each gallery somewhat, double their number and approximately a thousand artists could exhibit their work during a season. We should have the same opportunity to see every school of painting, but homogeneously arranged in units small enough to be intimately seen and widely appreciated. Above all, such an exhibition would be a continuous accompaniment of the city's life, a place visited by way of relaxation on our way elsewhere, not a gigantic accumulation thrust upon us for a month. For the majority, viewing pictures must remain a casual and incidental pastime, and if they are to be encouraged to frequent exhibi-

tions, we must abandon our attempts to incite arduous pilgrimages.

Our great need is for a building large enough, central enough. In New York we have no center where popular interest in paintings, if it existed, could naturally gravitate. Our parks remain barren, sacred to the airing of dogs and invalids, the recreation of children and infants, although our adult pleasures have an equally inalienable right to the acre they need for their playground. The exhibition galleries should be part of a larger group erected there, a stadium for dances and pageants, a hall for music festivals. There should be courts between the galleries which might be invaded annually by the Flower Show. One needs such intervals of relaxation, as in the Japanese garden at the Boston Art Museum—sudden intrusions of babbling water and flickering goldfish. There is no better way to

see plastic art than as a prelude to a play or an interlude between dances and music. We shall purchase pictures more frequently if we remember them as part of a holiday. The city will enjoy paintings for the first time when it takes them as an adventure during an "afternoon off" or even more casually on a walk through the park.

1917.

THE WAR AS ART CRITIC

I

AMONG the startling ironies of this war is the rôle it has assigned to the artist. He had remained an image-maker, primarily interested in recording fields in sunlight, women disrobing, bowls of fruit, and sprays of flowers. To his amazement, he found himself necessary to assure the efficience of a fifty-millimeter gun, the safety of a cargo of herring, or the sale of a million bonds. The technique of his purely pictorial experiments, impressionism which had bewildered the juries of fifty years ago, and cubism which outraged the juries of yesterday, became part of the technique of war. For camouflage began with the discovery by the manager of the largest emporium at Lyons that if a sentry's cape were dabbed with color in much the same manner as Monet had painted a haystack, the sentry

became a less obvious target. The development of camouflage has paralleled in its logic the development of modern art. As one passes the camouflaged steamers in our harbors it is apparent that the particular system of color planes which disguise them would never have been so readily devised if the clue to it had not already existed in cubist and futurist canvases. The atmospheric unity binding figure and landscape in a picture has been transferred to the soldier in the field, and the identity of a freighter becomes as unrecognizable as the features of Mr. X in a portrait by Picasso. We have found that naked weapons are ineffective, and called on the artist to decorate them. Every belligerent in turn has experienced the necessity of illuminating the naked word, and relied on its designers of advertisements to illustrate a text exhorting us to lend our savings or change our diet.

But the mere fact that the artist may also help to win the war in unexpected fashion does not satisfy us. We demand a profounder interpretation of war than he can give by advertising it piecemeal to the man in the street. We crave any purgation he can find for our pity and terror before the amazing proportions of modern carnage. We appeal to him to resume his historic rôle as the interpreter of human events in recording the permanent significance of our memories, in dignifying our common experience.

Our impatience expresses itself in an insatiable appetite for pictures. We want pictures, pictures of every ruined church, every trench in the mud of winter, in the mud of spring; bombardments, aëroplanes; Hill 203, Hill 304; field hospitals, base hospitals, ships at sea, and every process of building them. The innumerable photographs in newspapers and mag-

azines do not satiate us. We need the artist to dramatize the significance of every moment typical of the career of a soldier, a ship, or a cannon. Nothing must escape us, and the necessity of satisfying this craving has in turn become part of the conduct of war. Each French army has its official painter, and there are others incessantly touring every front. American painters have been attached to our expeditionary forces. The British government commissions a series of thirty-six lithographs. This is perhaps the first war in which the artist is a necessary adjunct to the general staff and has a combatant's standing.

Possibly because we believe in the supreme importance of this war, as contrasted with all other wars, and its significance in the destiny of mankind such as no other war has had or may ever have again, the features of every hill and every

trench as well as the features of every general and the type of every soldier, seem eternally memorable. But we are like a lover who feels that the scene of his tryst is a shrine, and carves initials on trees with the sense of turning them into monuments. We are like the mourner who exaggerates the importance of a tomb in perpetuating the memory of a hero. A few hills and valleys of this war may become permanent memories. But we shall feel no particular need of visualizing them slashed with trenches and pitted with shell holes in order to intensify our realization of their importance. In most of our furious picturing of this war we have done nothing more than encourage reporting on an elaborate scale, and we are certain to report most eagerly the very facts which will not vitally interest us five years after the conclusion of peace. We are editing a history of the war

more fully illustrated than the history of any other war, a fact chiefly of interest to future historians. Our official documents will be more vivid than others have been, and perhaps a more precious source of material for the novelist. And the fact that we dispatch our most distinguished etchers, lithographers and draughtsmen to the front cannot alter the futility of our enterprise. Constable might have been sent to sketch the sunken road at Waterloo, or Inness commissioned to paint the stone wall at Gettysburg. What significance would they have for us now, as distinct from any road in Kent or any stone wall in Vermont?

The war is providing us with an unexpected and much needed lesson in the first principles of illustration. For the problem of illustrating the war is simply the problem that confronts any

artist in recording any object: he must find some way of depicting it which can permanently revive our sense of its original significance. Because we conceive this war as a struggle of spiritual forces, we conceive every ship, every forge, and every garden-plot as their protagonists, as well as every soldier. And by a constant process of the transference of emotional values, every object has become surcharged with a significance which may never again be plausible. But for any painter to succeed in conveying even their vicarious significance, two talents are essential: imagination enough to seize whatever aspect it is which makes any scene, any figure inherently memorable; and intensity of conviction powerful enough to find a pictorial method of expressing it. For it is only the intensity of an artist's conviction which compels us to remain

interested in whatever he depicts—whether it be a war, a beggar, or a ballet-dancer.

II

OF THE Englishmen who have attempted to portray the war C. R. W. Nevinson alone seems to possess this necessary quality of imagination, which becomes apparent if one compares his work with that of the other English lithographers. Compare Nevinson's "Patrols" with Pears' study of a freighter loading at night, and sententiously entitled "Maintaining Overseas Forces." Whatever meaning this latter lithograph may have is given to it because I am informed this is a ship supplying an army. What the picture illustrates is the trick any draughtsman knows: by standing near the water-line and gazing at its bow, any tramp steamer of 3000 tons can be made

to have the bulk of a Leviathan. Mr. Pears, to get his momentary climax and to achieve his immediate effect, has made the ship seem big, a powerful thing, protected by its searchlights as by an arch of swords. Now, this notion of a steamer may be pictorially effective but it is merely part of our arrogant confidence in the bulk of a merchant marine which the submarine destroyed forever, by proving the largest ship an extremely vulnerable shell. Maintaining an army overseas, if it means anything, means an almost defenseless journey over a waste of menacing waters. Note how unerringly Mr. Nevinson has made his ship seem small, how in its relation to the mountainous swell of black waves it is almost obliterated, a fragile thing, before the eternal menace of the sea, whether it be submarines or reefs or floating mines. "Patrols" might even more fittingly be

entitled "Maintaining Overseas Forces," for in the relation of its forms, the lines of its movement, the suggestion of menace and danger in the blacks and grays, it expresses precisely what we have felt time and again: that the safety of the largest armies in the world hung by a single thread—a thread of little black ships threading their way over black waters. What Mr. Nevinson has expressed is our vision of ships in this war, of the eternal rôle of ships asserting their precarious mastery of the sea. Mr. Pears, however cleverly, has achieved nothing more than the portrait of any steamer.

Or again, compare Nevinson's "La Patrie" with Mr. Shepperson's lithograph of wounded arriving at a London railway station. Mr. Shepperson has seen an interesting pattern of black and white in the gloomy tunnel of the train shed and the lights that filter through it. Had he

intensified it, we might have felt the desolation of helpless men in a black vault as though visibly in the shadow of death, or escaping from a tomb. But Mr. Shepperson obviously had experienced no reaction intense enough to prompt him to intensify his pattern. Perhaps because he feared to be too gloomy; more probably because the scene aroused no profound emotion, whether gloomy or gay, he leaves his lithograph a sketch, vigorous and picturesque enough, which asserts that wounded soldiers are unloaded at a railway station, just as his other lithographs undoubtedly demonstrate that these same wounded are originally carried to a field dressing-station and ultimately recuperate on the lawn of a country estate. Mr. Nevinson's hospital scene, "La Patrie," is black also, but the artist has something to convey by the mere quality of blackness. He is not afraid to make it

as gloomy or as unpleasant as may be necessary to express the reality before him. And here he is not concerned with the record of hospital routine, but with the gaunt fact of human agony. The gloom of this barn is its pall, the sharp lights accentuate the stiffened contours of men rigid in pain, the ponderous and monotonous rhythms of helpless bodies. There is pain here, death, the patient gesture of suffering. In 1930 you might label Mr. Shepperson's lithograph "Arrival at Charing Cross of Victims of a Railway Accident," and no one but a collector of first editions of English lithographs would be any the wiser. But the fact of war is inherent in every line of Mr. Nevinson's field hospital. To any spectator it will always proclaim: "In a great war this was our agony."

But the modern battle itself baffles the artist because its point of impact may be

beyond the horizon or in the air. Not even at its climax does its action focus itself. Its essential action is the colossal impulse of mechanical forces clashing from horizon to horizon, the particular machine trivial in comparison, so that our conception of battle is an almost abstract thing—a concept of conflict we cannot wholly visualize.

The Futurists with whom Nevinson experimented, insisted on the importance of visualizing the life of a city street abstractly, the buildings vibrating to the concussions of careening motor-busses, and the tremors of subways passing invisibly through their foundations. But the "lines of force" which they invented to express the dynamics of modern life and their bewildering kaleidoscopes, were inexpressive because our emotion at the sight of a skyscraper does not depend on our learning that, to stand, it must be

built to sway so many inches to and fro. But our emotions at the sight of an aëroplane force us to conceive space as a mass that is thrust against, cloven. If the aëroplane dives we feel the volume of air resisting the pilot as water does a diver, and we imagine air currents as having surfaces on which his plane can rest, as an outstretched swimmer rests on the surface of the water. Otherwise an aëroplane is nothing more than a smudge against the sky. The expressive power of Nevinson's "lines of force" in his pictures of scouting and fighting planes, creates the same sense of space that the sight of aëroplanes in flight arouses, conveys the same sense of power emanating from a minute silhouette. In "Search-lights" the sky is a dome against which the lines of light thrust, as cannon might "feel out" unseen positions. And Nevinson can relate the diffuse illumination of a star-shell to the

jagged masses of trench and barbed-wire, which its lights lashes out of the darkness as with a knife. He has found graphic means to express the dynamic linking of earth and sky by the forces that plunge through them, the most impersonal and yet the most dramatic aspect of modern warfare, probably the only aspect which has a pictorial beauty.

III

BUT whatever the sublimity of the panorama which obliterates the soldier, we wait for him to emerge when he can again become articulate as a human being and achieve expression in his moments of reflection and comment. For this is the first war in which the value of war has been so universally questioned, and in which the morale of any infantryman depended less on his faith in victory than on his philosophy of victory and his political

creed however crude. He is a brother in arms to the race of peasants who plow their fields under fire, and to the machinist who may be turning shells on his lathe while dreaming of industrial revolution. M. Jonas, Lieutenant Fabre, and Mr. Flameng tour the front and produce their official paintings which contain merely collections of animated uniforms, for they cannot distinguish the soldier of today from the conscript of any other epoch, except for the details of his equipment. But the most summary drawing of Steinlen or Forain stamp his personality. Of Steinlen, Anatole France wrote: "He has suffered and laughed with the passer-by. The soul of the crowd has passed into him. He has felt its terrible simplicity and its grandeur." Steinlen never forgets that the poilu was yesterday the passer-by with whom he laughed and suffered—the beggar huddled asleep in doorways, the lover

in mean streets, the street-singer of Montmartre, the factory-hand of Montrouge, the gamin of the streets. The advent of war can add nothing to Steinlen's hatred of militarism for he has pictured workmen facing armed police during a strike. He has portrayed a line of locked-out workmen trudging heavily, aimlessly through the snow. He understands as instinctively a line of them as soldiers trudging through the mud of Flanders—men again suffering in a struggle which to them is inevitable. Because he could feel compassion for the loneliness of tramps trudging through country villages at dawn, he can portray the loneliness of soldiers on leave in an empty street and call them "Stray Dogs."

Forain's line is the product of his wit as Steinlen's is the product of his compassion. Beneath a summary sketch of

two soldiers chatting in a trench he wrote:

"If they only hold out."

"Who?"

"The Civilians"—

and rallied Paris more effectively than any battle-cry. France roared for a year to the echoes of "Pourvu qu'ils tiennent—les civils" until the watch-word of Verdun silenced them. And this same power underlines another newspaper sketch of two poilus kneeling beside a comrade's grave: "What do you expect, old fellow? This is life." Is any more final expression of the soldier's attitude toward death possible? Or of the life of the trenches than in "War Landscape: 1" in which the lines of the trench almost hide a few distant sentries at their listening post, their backs to two graves near a plank walk? All our outcry against atrocities and the brutalities of invasion are epitomized in draw-

ings which show nothing more than the gesture of a dead peasant's body sprawling in a field, or a helmet on a table and a child staring at a closed door. Forain's propaganda in war is powerful because he has always been a propagandist, intensifying his line until he could use it as a weapon. All his etchings and lithographs as well as his political cartoons, have attempted to express a criticism of life, whether he drew a criminal or a parvenu, judges or actors, deputies or stock-brokers. The penetrating power of his irony which made him the satirist of his contemporaries and perhaps the wittiest commentator on French life, has enabled him to make an army articulate.

For American painters who depart officially or unofficially to picture the war, the lesson of Steinlen's and Forain's lithographs, or Nevinson's paintings is the same. The opportunity of seeing the war

at first-hand will not prove the essential stimulus. The mere impact of their experiences will not breed the power to record them. The quality of their imagination will determine what they see of war. They will understand the life of the trenches no better than they have understood the life of their own time.

IV

WHAT influence a world war may have on the development of contemporary painting is a problem for conjecture. We may be led to argue that such war pictures as we have today are, after all, only the work of onlookers, that so stupendous an event as a world war cannot fail to inspire masterpieces, that the trenches must breed geniuses as well as destroy them. But the masterpieces of this war will probably be such as other wars have inspired—in the main dramas, poems,

novels, rarely pictures. In almost every epoch, war as a theme has been almost totally ignored by painters creative enough to produce canvases of any permanent value. War has never changed the center of their particular interest, even when they were its participants. Invariably they returned to their subject. Michelangelo reconstructed the fortifications of Florence in defense of the new republic of 1529, defended the hill of San Miniato under bombardment and saved the campanile by covering it with bags of wool and mattresses hung on ropes. When he returned after the surrender of Florence to the Medici he returned to his subject, the nude: "Leda," the first studies for "The Last Judgment," "Day" and "Night" for the tombs of the same princes he had fought as General and Inspector of Fortifications. His one study of battle twenty-five years previous was

the cartoon for the "Battle of the Cascine" in competition with Leonardo da Vinci, who designed engines of war but whose only battle picture seems to have been "The Battle Anghieri," for the same competition. Courbet, to turn to more modern instances, took a violent part in the Commune of 1871 and was one of the mob which destroyed the Vendôme column. But there is not a sketch to record the violence of his experience in a war which had made him a revolutionist. He returned to his subject. The immediate consequences was a series of still-lifes and landscapes—"Apples and Pheasants," "The Giant Chestnut Trees." The war of 1871 left no profound trace of itself in the history of French art, except in the cases of such painters as Detaille and de Neuville who could contribute nothing to its development. The American Civil War, which can also be con-

sidered not only a military conflict but a struggle for essential human rights, was followed by the development of landscape and genre painting as the typical forms of American expression. And such genius as American painters possessed was far more influenced by the romanticism of a group of French painters who had depicted the forest of Fontainebleau in 1840 than by the fact that they were living in a new political era marked by the year 1861. As a French critic, M. de Sizeranne, remarks, after reviewing the inevitable banality of the war pictures at the recent Paris salon, "It is easier for a megalomaniac to set fire to a whole planet than to introduce an unexpected line or new tone in the painting of a period." For an artist is interested only in his particular pictorial problems. And unless war can touch the particular facts which stimulate his capacity for esthetic

experiment, he will ignore even a world cataclysm.

In the most martial works of Michelangelo, Rubens or Velasquez, war is used less as a theme than as a pretext. The Renaissance rediscovered the human body and the range of its movements and grew progressively more and more interested in the rhythmic linking of figures in action, creating the type of painting still called composition. Experiments in composition enlisted the inventive energy of the greatest minds. Both Rubens and Michelangelo welcomed such a subject as battle, because like "The Last Judgment" it provided them with a reason for combining more nude bodies in action, in every conceivable posture and pose, than any theme they themselves could have invented. If we may believe contemporary accounts of the "Battle of the Cascine," the dominating figure of the composition

was a naked soldier, surprised while bathing but reclining on the bank of a stream in the pose of a languorous god utterly oblivious of the fracas within a few feet of him—probably an early study for the gesture of the recumbent figures, realized more than thirty years later, on the Medici tombs. Rubens was as little concerned with versimilitude in "The Battle of Tunis" or the "Battle of Ivry." In his sketch for "Henry IV Entering Paris," the dominating group is again the nude prisoners stripped naked by pillaging soldiery and hurled from a bridge headlong into the Seine.

The greater realism of Velasquez's "Surrender of Breda" is the consequence of no changed interest in war but of the fact that the central problem of painting had become the nature of light enveloping the human figure, and the painter capable of research preferred to study

light on figures less violently in motion than in the more classic types of composition. Composition became the problem of relating and lighting groups of portraits. Velasquez found in the "Surrender of Breda" the pretext for a portrait group and as such it still interests us. But the problem of light has continued to obsess the painter, its creation of color, the new means it gave him to express form. And because an olive tree is as effective a vehicle for chromatic overtones as a human being, the original importance of the human figure as a theme has successfully declined until even the mildly dramatic quality of a group of portraits by Velasquez or Hals disappears in the canvases of Manet and Renoir.

Hence the bulk of modern painting is done by academics to satisfy the greater public which has always craved dramatic element in every form of artistic expres-

sion. The academic painter remains popular on condition that he allows no esthetic experiments to interfere with his ability to supply pictures in which the human theme is dominant and the dramatic element retained. Academicians of course avoid the difficulty of achieving this by evading the problems of related figures in motion which challenged the energy of Rubens and Raphael. They prate of the lessons of the great masters, and supply the element of human drama with enough gesture and detail of facial expression to explain the theme of any anecdote. Not one in ten is able to control on a single canvas the number of figures involved in a riot or a coronation. And at the very moment that the public has discovered the elaborate drama of a world war, packed with every type of engrossing anecdote, there is not an academy capable of producing a picture of a

skirmish masterful enough to interest its own patrons even as a story ten years after it is painted.

The only new type of art this war can produce is foreshadowed in Nevinson's canvases of searchlights and aëroplanes. For Nevinson has expressed the war precisely because it supplied him with his own subject, rather than tempted him to find a new one. His esthetic problem had been the problem of finding some pattern which could express the impersonal character of the mechanical forces dominating modern life, and which the largest crowd, seen as a group of individuals, no longer reveals. Such a pattern modern war supplied him. If Steinlen and Forain find the individual still expressive of war it is because their subject derived from Daumier, is the art of portraying an individual so that he reveals the social forces of his time and becomes the most im-

mortal comment upon them. But paintings such as Nevinson's will tend more and more, as their inherent structure is developed, to become highly decorative patterns. Their dramatic element, their power of suggesting dynamic forces, will remain impersonal. And not the most dramatic drawing of a poilu by Daumier himself could satisfy the present popular craving to hear the story of war, which the greatest of modern wars has awakened.

The public will turn to the agencies which supply pictorial drama. War pictures will again become a profitable and frequent subject particularly at the Royal Academy and the French salons. Because, for a generation, the majority of every population will be the wives or widows, the mothers or offspring of soldiers, these war pictures may have a more genuine popularity and a wider

public than Detaille's or de Neuville's. More painters will be impelled to paint them, because more painters will return from this war than from any other with no capital save their medals and their memories, and faced with the necessity of retrieving interrupted careers at the first opportunity. Their war pictures, by reviving immediate memories of heroism and death, will move their spectators, perhaps profoundly, and create the illusion of being great works of art. They will, inevitably, receive medals, be commissioned by the state, presented to the state. If America cannot produce them, we shall import them and present them to art museums, where it will probably be as difficult to dislodge them as their present counterparts, "The Defense of Champigny" or "Washington Crossing the Delaware."

Ultimately they will descend to the

lumber-room. And if the generation which sees them disappear from its galleries still reads "Under Fire" or "Men in War," it will find the type of its heroes in the print-room—under "School of Daumier—see Steinlen and Forain." Possibly by then the full-length sisters of the goddesses on our postage stamps and silver dollars, holding in one hand the Cathedral of Rheims instead of the scales of Justice or a cornucopia, will also have disappeared from the walls of state capitols and public libraries, replaced by the more decorative patterns of search-lights and winging planes. And these will tell the ultimate story of this war: that in making war we filled the earth with horror, but filled the heavens with wonder and kept them beautiful.

1918.

No greater single disservice has been done the cause of American opera than Miss Millay's libretto for *The King's Henchman*. Because of the enthusiasm of her fellow craftsmen for its "natural singing," its passages "deeply dyed with felicity," and its "uniquely lovely lines," coupled with the huzzas that greeted its première, the assumption seems to be general that the problem of singing opera in English has been triumphantly solved. The possibility of giving opera successfully in English may have been demonstrated, but not the possibility of singing it. What Miss Millay has proved is precisely the opposite; namely, the almost insuperable difficulties that even distinguished English verse can present to the singer, and the obstacles with which, almost inevitably, it hedges vocal utterance. However natural the singing of

this text may be to the poet, to the singer it is an almost continuous succession of vocal brambles, a hissing procession of sibillants, an insistent simmering of *s's*, almost without parallel in contemporary poetry. Intermeshed with these are an equally constant succession of *ist's*, *th's*, and *sh's*, which at worst produce a kind of verbal sludge, and at best lines that glitter, slightly congealed with a kind of brilliant, verbal sleet; and these, with the exception of a few freer and more sonorous passages into which each act occasionally thaws, any actor would have the greatest difficulty in declaiming musically for five continuous minutes. To the singer the problem of projecting these words with any vocal purity or beauty whatever is almost insoluble.

Having chosen as her theme an early English legend, Miss Millay has also chosen to affect the traditional Eliza-

bethan verb endings, and the lines are further thickened with an endless procession of *diddest, sightest, wouldst, canst, hast, swearest, treadest, oozeth,* and *rathest,* although *would, could, did* and *has* are obviously less harsh. A few Saxon solecisms, such as *ywis, hwita, hight,* and *wooze,* are added, presumably for good measure. In comparison, the asperities of Wagner's text for the *Ring of the Niebelungen* become mellifluous. It may well be that Miss Millay has uttered a new and shivering lyric note and achieved a phonetic pitch as liberating for the traditional cadences of English poetry as were the intervals of Debussy for the traditional harmonic intervals of operatic scores. But in relation to its prime purpose, as a vehicle for song, and a text for singers, the literary beauties of *The King's Henchman* are irrelevant. The very qualities of style which may combine to give

its verses poetic distinction combine also to make them futile exercises in vocal virtuosity. Such lines as those of Maccus' opening song—

> Stroke upon stroke, sledging and slaying
> Swashes the sword, shivers the shield—

can hardly be declaimed as recitative, nor, for that matter,

> Now hath his lady a bitter burthen to thole.

One *s* leaps to another, as iron filings leap to the polished arms of a magnet. The poignance of first love in the mouths of Aelfrida and Aethelwold buzzes almost continually: "In such a mizzling mist," "mazéd in drowzy sleep," "wood unstill with small sounds," "busy spindle be at rest." The buzzing continues through their duet of farewell to Britain, "the sea was smelt and smooth," "sighing silk and gossamer," "blossomy

sweet summer." The *s* is sharpened to alliterative insistence in

> The wind that soughs in the sedges at the edge of
> the pool
> Has seen the swan go by,

and

> Sawst thou ever moss so sea-weed sodden wet?

The alliterative *s* approaches nothing less than a lisp with:

> Thou canst not leave me so
> With thy sweet look, thy arrowy sweet, sweet
> look,
> Sunk to a feather in my heart.

And the impulse to swish is pushed to the point of:

> These whispering girls,
> A little fairish and a little foulish—

when "a little fair and a little foul" would have been, even as spoken words, so much more simply musical.

This that thou seest splashed out in the dust like
a bucket of kitchen slop,

and

With clutchéd kirtle climbing the slimy stones

are typical of lines thickened with consonants that hiss or clack at climactic moments. On almost any page a succession of tight-lipped verse endings, such as *me, wilderness, wolves, God, heart, said, world, sheath, windpipe, mouth, it, father, candle,* rarely provide one on which a full musical note could be vocally sustained. Certain musical critics have taken Mr. Deems Taylor to task for the Wagnerian sonorities of his score, and Mr. Serafin for the stridence of his conducting, which were reported to have "drowned" the singers. The singers, on the contrary, could only have been saved from total submersion by such sound musical strategy. Nothing less than

a wide swinging tide of musical rhythm, to which they might happily surrender, could have carried them through the swashing crests of Miss Millay's prosody.

The persistence of opera in foreign languages is not the result of snobbery, seeking to add glamour to opera by keeping it a foreign thing and thereby more "grand." Nor is it assured by the machinations of any clique or claque. The villain in the case is far more impersonal than is usually supposed. The case against opera in English rests on a few simple and fundamental facts inherent in the relation existing between the vowel structure of any language and the process of vocal tone production. And until American poets face these facts, neither the most deeply dyed verbal felicities nor the greatest magic of metaphor will enable them to create a new tradition. Singing tone is produced by what may be roughly

described as a rounded, open throat and is best emitted through a rounded, open mouth. Vowels are its essential medium, consonants its greatest obstruction. The singer practicing scales uses the conventional sounds of *do, re* (ray), *mi* (mee), *fa, sol, la, ti, do.* And when syllables that make verbal sense are substituted, the words that interfere least with the purity of singing tone and are capable of the elision that does not cut the breath that supports them, will be words that have a predominance of free vowel sounds, and particularly free vowel endings, the more openly pronounced the better, so that while lips make sense, mouth and throat are kept open at the same time. The difficulty of singing English lies in the fact that its consonant endings and its *ch's, ist's,* and *th's,* so predominant in comparison with French and Italian, are constantly thudding a singer's tongue

against his or her teeth, shutting a mouth when it should be kept open, and forcing breath to be sustained behind closed teeth.

That opera originated in Italy may be an historical accident, but not the prestige that it has enjoyed for three centuries in Europe. And its continued popularity is not due to the fact that Italians have a preëminent gift for writing popular tunes, but to the fact that tunes sung to Italian words can be so much more easily and brilliantly sung, that they tend to become universally popular. And we have the continued anomaly of audiences applauding singers impersonating stories of which they cannot understand a single word. *The Marriage of Figaro* is more frequently sung in Italian than to the original German libretto. Give any Cherubino the choice of singing her aria to the words:

Ihr die ihr Triebe des Herzens kennt,
Spricht, ist es Liebe?

and

Voi che sapete, che cosa è amor,
Donne vedete s'io l'ho nel cor,

and she will not hesitate to choose the Italian text and thereby rid herself of *ens, cht, ist,* and *es.* Any reader can make the test by repeating the alternative texts aloud and noticing how the German flattens his mouth, and how the Italian opens it. Even the comparatively greater proportion of final *s's* and *x's* in French is mitigated by the fact that they are often silent, and even when not, are soft like the English *z*, or elided with a vowel that immediately follows, so that

Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix

is more easily sung than the equivalent "heart," "opes" or "opens," and "voice." And the ratio of vowels to consonants will be more favorable to the singer in

French as compared with German, and in Italian as compared with French.

Indeed, almost any random sentence of an Italian lexicon can be freely and easily sung, as, for example, "*Svegliatemi domani alle sei*" (Svayleeahtaymee do*mah*nee *al*lay *say*ee), which is simply, "Wake me to-morrow at six o'clock." But any singer, in the process of sustaining these final *ee's* and *ay's*, can project any emotion into them, so that "*Svegliatemi, svegliatemi*" has a dying fall, and the refrain of "*alle sei, alle sei,*" repeating in Mozartean arabesques, in Verdian sonorities, or in the bell-like echoes of David or Donizetti, becomes tremulous with hope or apprehension until the spectator shares all the panic of a secret tryst or the poignance of first love. And by the time his ear registers the trivial sense, "Wake me to-morrow at six," the words are already so freighted with emotional overtones that they are less trivial than

they sound. Which is of course the very reason why generation upon generation of American opera-goers have been perennially moved to tears by their Neddas and Violettas and Madama Butterflys, to the despair of those critics who could understand what they were saying.

The average American song-writer or librettist, hard put to it to reduce the high proportion of English consonant endings, particularly those of verbs, attempts to solve the problem by overworking the present participle, and we get the "roaming through the gloaming" of the drawing-room ballad, or the "my heart is paining" of Gretchen's lament at her spinning-wheel. To take Miss Millay's

Thou canst not leave me so
With thy sweet look, thy arrowy sweet, sweet look,
Sunk to a feather in my heart

and transpose it into

No, no,
You cannot leave me so,
Your dear look is sinking
Into my heart, like a feather, ah, me!
Take it back ere we part,

is, of course, to translate poetry into doggerel. But there can be no doubt, I think, that any disinterested singer would prefer the banal version, and any disinterested composer find it less of a hurdle for his harmonies.

The problem of writing an English libretto is essentially a task for a lyric poet. For in English, more than in any other language, the words of an opera must sing themselves before they can be sung. And the astonishing irony of the present occasion is that Miss Millay is the same poet who first ravished our startled ears with:

All I could see from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood.
I turned and looked the other way
And saw three islands in a bay. . . .

And with these words any Isolde or Ariadne might have

> traced the line
> Of the horizon thin and fine,

and loosed her voice. The purity and simplicity of such cadences provide the composer with a scaffolding on which he can freely establish his musical progressions. The element of drama in any opera must remain purely formal; no motivation can ever be adequately elaborated or conveyed. Its import can only be conveyed by the emotional overtones that lyrically musical words can have when sung. When the musically significant libretto in English is written, it will abound, not in such archaisms as *ywis*, *whita*, and *wooze*, but those simpler and often monosyllabic Anglo-Saxon words, free from the clank of classic harness, that have descended through every cen-

tury of English prosody, stripped clean, like runners from the hills. It will echo the lyric simplicity of all high moments of English lyric poetry, the purity of cadence which itself echoes from:

It was the winter wilde
When the Heav'n-born childe
All meanly wrapped in the rude manger lies,

through all the intervening voices, to:

I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,
The air was cooling and so very still,

and:

I will arise and go, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made.

The libretto that can link itself with the destiny of American opera will be Elizabethan, not in the sense of containing a succession of *wouldst's, couldst's, hast's,* and *didst's,* but because it will recapture the musical impulse of the Elizabethan

madrigals, when English was a singer's language.

Miss Millay, more than any other American poet, has in her previous lyrics already done so. In comparison with them *The King's Henchman* seems the verbal masquerade of a poetess in a farthingale, for the moment entranced with the swish of her own skirts. Miss Millay has failed like her own henchman, sallying forth to find a bride for his overlord and achieving instead a momentary, moonstruck mésalliance. Fortunately, she need not, like Aetholwold, fall upon her sword, but only upon her pen, her fountain-pen, eschewing her newly sharpened Saxon quill which scratches so insistently. It is to be hoped she will. For, unless Mr. Taylor's score prove as compelling as *Tristan und Isolde*, no singers a decade hence, save under the direst compulsion, will battle with this alternately simmering and

shivering text, and critics will again wonder why soprano, tenor, or baritone continue to make their reputations singing trivial words which release their voices instead of throttling them.

1927.

A REVOLUTION AS CURATOR: MOSCOW, 1926

I

THE dogmas of a proletariat triumph in the setting of a fairy tale. Communism should have been appropriately born in a forest of factory chimneys. But from the birch grove on the Lenin Hills, not one is to be seen. Instead the clustered blue and silver and gold domes of all the churches—"the forty times four"—seem magical bulbs planted out of reach on the house tops. The pillared mansions of the 1820's, painted in tomato red with stuccoed columns and friezes in buff and lemon yellow, are as deliberately gay as any toy. The bell tower of a turquoise-blue church raises its medley of forms: a first storey pierced with Renaissance casements, recedes to a Georgian belfry of white cornices and

pilasters, as if a giant confectioner had reproduced an elevation by Sir Christopher Wren in pastry sugars. And this is capped in turn by an indigo steeple, shaped precisely like a fairy godmother's hood, studded in high relief with gilded stars that sprawl over the roof of the church itself. At the end of the street, ten thousand of the Moscow garrison are parading in the Kremlin Square. There dogma rings again with metallic precision as commissars harangue the troops from the terraced roof of a modernistic wooden tomb that covers the mummified Lenin, already endowed with the visible immortality of any king-god. Like Rameses II., even the hairs of his head are preserved.

The triumph of May Day is celebrated in a kaleidoscope of visual paradoxes. Every soldier's coat and every officer's is the traditional linen smock of the Russian

peasant. Only the intensely green and blue and cherry-red trousers indicate the hierarchies of an army. Pendent from an opposite roof, red banners exhort the workers of the world to unite. Echoing that credo in choruses of a thousand, regiments wheel and pass with the eager tread of crusaders. They are followed by the rumbling paraphernalia of modern imperialism: siege guns, field artillery, caterpillar tanks. By noon the last lancers clatter through the "Gate of Salvation," where, before the Revolution, tradition forced every passer-by to doff his hat to frescoes of the Redeemer. The shrine of the Iberian Virgin still clings to the wall between squat arches. Through them another procession pours into the Kremlin Square: singing columns of workingmen's societies, each clustered about the banner of a new faith. While they are harangued in turn before Lenin's tomb,

an army signal corps in another square, is setting up military searchlights to command an open-air stage where later a mass pageant will celebrate the union of factory workers and peasants. For this May Day anniversary of revolution is also the holiest day of the ancient Russian calendar: Easter. And there must be rival attractions to lure the crowds from the spectacle of mass at the churches, "forty times four."

I waited for the first at a cinema which followed a revolutionist soldier through all the escapades of every military melodrama: hairbreadth escapes from Czarist fleets, ambushes, and prison camps. And as the last reel pointed a proletarian moral, when the soldier's bourgeoise mistress, nourished during the famine by her lover's dole of bread, deceives him with a gross profiteer of her own class, the chimes sound from a convent opposite

for the last remnant of the disinherited. There before a convoluted rococo altar and a gleaming ikonostasis, nuns, black-robed, chanted a golden litany that had the lilt of rounds and carols sung in harvested fields. At dusk the Kremlin Square was empty except for a line of pilgrims waiting to be shepherded past Lenin's countenance. Their forbears once waited as patiently to file past the silver shrine of St. Sergius. At the Gate of Salvation peasants stopped to kiss the sacred ikon. At night, one crowd craned to see the open-air pageant. Another streamed to the Cathedral like any American football crowd converging at a stadium. At the stroke of twelve, a mob within hurled late comers down the steps, to follow priests and acolytes, candles alight, while they circled the church, crying musically, "Where is Christ? We must find Him. Where is Christ?"—then scrambled back

as bronze bells clashed and mass began again. The portals were packed with panting spectators struggling to catch a glimpse of the pomp within. Most of them had the casual eye of sightseers. I walked back to my hotel past holiday lovers loitering in darkened streets.

In the morning light, the furniture of my room in a hotel reserved by the state exclusively for foreigners, seemed another anachronism: an ormolu console table under a gilt pier-glass, gilt and satin furniture in profusion, an immense gold-legged Louis XIV. table, onyx-topped, at which one might comfortably seat a board of directors; opposite, between the windows, a desk of the typical office variety, fitted with a marble ink-well, bronze-tipped blotters, memorandum pads, and a private telephone: the standardized office accouterments of any business executive. This was perhaps the

state's ironic attempt, as hotel-keeper, to make the visiting bourgeois capitalist feel at home. Across the Sverdlofplatz, a Bureau of Cultural Relations busied itself with him as though sight-seeing and not concessions were his object. One secretary analyzed the week's repertory at the theaters for me and explained the relative importance of Moscow's thirty-nine museums. I heard two Englishmen, Conservative Members of Parliament, directed to a day's round through the schools. A Japanese was sent to inspect a chocolate factory in a suburb.

And the paradoxes of May Day continued for even the most casual sightseer who had been warned to expect a monotonous regimentation of human interest and gray uniformity. Whatever literary censorship existed seemed content to confine itself to newspapers and current novels. At the theaters, Tairoff

alternated O'Neill's *Hairy Ape* with Lecoq's *Giroflé-Girofla* and Wilde's *Salomé*. Meyerhold dramatized *Roaring China*, the revolt of waterfront coolies under the guns of a British battleship, and followed it with a Russian "classic," Ostrowsky's *Forest*. The State Opera presented in turn *Lohengrin*, *Pique-Dame*, and a ballet for *Esmeralda*, wherein several hundred ballerinas pranced through the shadows of Hugo's Notre Dame with a regimental precision that would have delighted any Parisian of the Second Empire. The theaters of the Revolution relived, in terms of melodrama, memories of October, 1917. Stanislavsky imperturbably augmented his repertory of twenty years ago. *The Blue Bird* was revived, and the house was a-twitter with excited children. And this amazing variety of spectacles was further augmented by two circus music-halls. At one, animal trainers and loop-

the-loop cyclists were momentarily eclipsed by a group of American negro singers whose jazz delighted their audiences to a point of frenzy, although the Commissars who had imported them were reported to be disappointed because the negroes neither looked nor behaved like a subject people.

Nevertheless the Soviet state had evidently not turned prompter in the theater. Nor was its hand more discernible in the shop windows, although Slavic wage-slaves, fulfilling a German's prophecy, owned the machines. Stationers displaying pyramids of colored inks, note-books, and fountain-pens, flanked with cameras and binoculars, seem counterparts of those in the Bismarckstrasse where I stocked my brief-case a week before. I found hothouse lilies and anemones for Jack Reed's tomb. I bargained for an hour with a bibliophile bookseller for the four-

teen first folios of Ferrario as though I were in the Rue de Seine, and wandered, with Communist bibliophiles, through the book fair that extended under the Kremlin battlements for the length of the Alexandrovsky gardens, where the state offered the literary remnants of a bourgeois era at half price. Russians complained to me of the inferior quality of their native manufacturers, but conceded that the chocolate factory was a shining exception. Its wares gleamed in mounds of silver and gold foil at every grocer's and were blended with a sophistication skilled enough to reconcile any gourmet to a life's exile from Marquis' or Maillard's. At Sergievo, a village toymaker brought a doll to my droschke. It was dressed in silk, embroidered to imitate a Kustarsha in her Sunday best. Its eyes had eyelashes and closed in sleep. It could be properly undressed, for even its under-

wear unbuttoned. I knew it would pass the exacting censorship of childhood anywhere.

II

IN less than a week of May days the smoke that had ascended for five years from the tripods of soothsayers in American editorial columns dissipated itself, and the Soviet ogre, seen through their palsied eyes as bent upon destroying the harvests of civilization, was revealed as an extraordinarily careful custodian of all the beauty of the past, as eager to protect art as to endow motherhood, as jealous of restoring its original aspects as Viollet-le-Duc, and as convinced as Prince Albert that museums can become crystal palaces of enlightenment. Museums have become a Soviet passion. There are thirty-one in Leningrad and thirty-nine in Moscow, not only museums

of the arts and sciences, but museums that analyze, depict, or dramatize every phase of Russia's life; a museum "for People's Health," a museum for the Protection of Motherhood, a museum for Social Hygiene, a museum for Pedagogy, and a museum for "Child-Life before School"; a museum of the Soviet Army and Navy, and a museum of Royal Military Uniforms from Peter the Great to Nicolas II.; a museum of Musical Instruments; and a museum of Royal Harness and State Coaches; a museum devoted to Darwin; a museum recording the development of Coats of Arms, and another the Development of the Post Office; a museum of Trade Unionism; a museum of Furniture; a museum for Home Industries, and a museum of Toys and Toy-making; a museum of the Stage and Stage Settings; and five separate museums for the literary remains of Tolstoi, Tcekov,

Dostoevski, Turgeniev, and Pushkin. There are, besides these, two museums that evoke the background of an epoch: one a mansion of a nobleman of the eighteenth century, "The Boyar's House," and "Museum of Life in the Forties," whose crinolined inhabitants seem to have deserted it for an afternoon. The sun illuminates the Gothic ruins painted on the window shades. In the tutor's study his desk still holds his gold-scrolled volume of Mörike and a flute which he doubtless played every evening while he looked out over the gold and silver cupolas and dreamed of his native spire until the family assembled for dinner in the oval dining-room below.

Lunatscharski has made the Kremlin his especial province. When one faction of his party urged the destruction of all the Romanoff treasures as the symbols of tyranny, Lunatscharski is reported to

have saved the day with the retort, "These things do not belong to us; they belong to history." I doubt that he would have had to contend with any mob. For the crowds that surged through the Winter Palace during the October revolution left everything undisturbed, even the Victorian knickknacks on Nicolas' dressing-table. The Kremlin is still a fortress, but at the turret gate the officer of the day supplies a military orderly as a guide to the booty of the Romanoffs, which is as carefully preserved and as meticulously catalogued as any of the treasures of the Louvre or the Hapsburg. But the past has not only been preserved but restored. With a technique miraculous in its delicacy, five centuries of re-painting in the Uspenskaya Cathedral and the Church of St. Basil have been scraped away, revealing the original frescoes and altar paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth cen-

turies, whose very existence the Soviet was the first to suspect. The work began almost as soon as the famine ended and is being extended to all the great churches of the countryside. One of these, the convent of the Troitskaya Lavra, whose thirteen churches have been a pilgrimage shrine for the three centuries since its battlement walls repulsed a Polish invasion, is again the center of pilgrimage as a museum of ecclesiastical art, housing a fabulous array of jeweled reliquaries, Byzantine enamels, ikons of gilded silver, priests' robes cut from antique Venetian velvets, Italian damasks and Persian brocades, and medieval embroideries that the church had begun to snip into banners for its latter-day saints.

A political oligarchy that has revoked so much of the traditional political freedom of the individual is singularly concerned to preserve the tradition of his

freedom of taste. Just as the baubles of the Czar and his church are restored to their original shrines, the trophies of the bourgeois collector are preserved as he collected them, and you visit them as you might in Durand-Ruel's apartment in the Rue de Rome or Duncan Phillip's mansion in Washington. The Soviet guide-book reads: "First State Museum of Modern Western Painting." But at the door of Schukin's mansion, his old housekeeper takes your hat and coat, and you find his Gaugins, Van Goghs, Cézannes, Renoirs, and Picassos in the rooms where he abandoned them. Matisse's still-lifes hang in the dining-room precisely as he arranged them when he came to Moscow for that purpose. After having seen Matisse's canvases in the bedlam of the Salon d'Automne or in the velvet-walled lair of an art dealer waiting to convince a stray banker that they were an ex-

cellent investment, one gains a fresh sense of how beautifully they can ornament a room and what esthetic satisfaction is to be gained from living with them. The Second State Collection duplicates the masters of the first. But they are housed separately in Morisoff's mansion as he assembled them, and where he lived with them. And one remembers that under our Jeffersonian cult of individualism the American counterparts of Schukin and Morisoff would have felt impelled to leave their collections to some community's art gallery and become a name in pictorial perspectives, where canvases stand at attention, gilt frame touching gilt frame, like the epaulets of soldiers, right dressed on parade, forever waiting to be passed in review.

The preëmption of title by the state is often more nominal than real. In many cases the former owner becomes his own

curator. The Toy Museum is the work of a former landowner and painter, given a house by the government and ordered to make a museum for children. Its poster invites them: "Children, come to your museum." "They, in fact, come by hundreds," Sir Martin Conway reports, "and he receives them and shows them around. They discuss the kind of toy they would like. He draws it. They criticize. . . . The toy is finally made. It sells by the hundreds and thousands. The children recognize him in the streets and run after him calling, 'Here comes Uncle Museum.' " For the Kustarnye, the peasant toymakers who have worked for generations in a wide circle of hamlets adjacent to Moscow, there is also a museum where they may re-discover the traditions of their craft, from their earliest wooden soldiers and leather dolls stuffed with feathers, to the bright

wooden villages of yesterday. And this same Museum for Home Industry sells their toys as well.

Museums in Moscow have become something more than monuments, and developed into workshops of a living craft. No sooner have you visited the stages of any of the experimental theaters than you are asked, "Have you seen *our* museum?" At Meyerhold's theater you may study the clarification of his theory of production in twelve accurately carpentered models of constructivist settings from the first experiment to the one that holds the stage. The Opera's settings are to be seen in miniature during any entr'acte in an anteroom of the foyer. The Moscow Art Theater has preserved the records of its entire history from the first penciled rendezvous sent by Danchenko to Stanislavsky, and records in photographs of Tcekova, Katchalov,

Moskvin, and of the entire company in every rôle they have ever played, their growing power of impersonation. At the edge of the city is a private house, where for two generations Bakrushkin has been patiently compiling drawings and sketches of every Russian production of any artistic importance, until not only his, but neighboring attics, are stacked with the thousands of sketches he has no room to show. His house is now the State Museum of the Theater, and he remains as its curator. There you may follow the history of scenic design in Russia from the classic backdrops of 1829 that echoed Schinkel's at Berlin to Moskowitz's reeling arches that echo Delaunay's painting of St. Severin, dated 1909. And as a clew to the picture-book gayety of Soudeikine and the studied naïveté of Gontcharova, you find also the irrepressible Peter, the Horse Dealer and the Policeman, of the

Russian Punch and Judy shows that still play in village streets.

Neither here nor elsewhere is modernity paraded as heresy, or tradition put forward as a revelation of eternal truth. Moscow museums abandon, with penetrating common sense, the pretension still maintained by museums in Europe and America, of being private heavens where curators, assuming the dual rôle of Peter and Pope, canonize saints and divide the blesséd from the damned to the politely muted trumpets of a last judgment. The theaters are, to be sure, labeled "academic" and "experimental," but this was the first time that I had seen the words used without implied praise or contempt, in a manner as noncommittal as the symbols on a map. "Academic" means nothing more than realistic; "experimental," decorative or non-realistic. And the Russian theater's productions are a dramatic

demonstration of how futile any absolute concept of style must be. The Moscow Art Theater is the acknowledged home of meticulous realism. But *The Blue Bird* was produced with every decorative device that gave it the illusion of an ebbing dream. At one moment, its actors became nothing but golden bubbles dancing in darkness. Two days later, in the interests of authenticity, the staff generals of *Alexander I.* obviously wore corsets under their uniforms. Meyerhold evolved constructivism as a protest against using the slightest replica of reality. Nothing was to be real in the sense of imitating any stick or stone. Nevertheless, *Roaring China,* to the horror of the purists, contained a tank of water and a battleship mast of interlaced iron built by a firm of engineers. Tairoff's constructions seemed a series of parallel bars and trapezes, on which his singers of *Giroflé*

leaped and swung. But he admitted that the scenic skeleton of constructivism would presently grin at its own death. And the feeling seemed to have become general that it was of no more intrinsic importance that a play be performed on wooden trestles than that "Ave Maria" be sung upon a step-ladder rather than on the stage. The question remained whether either song or play moves us more on one level than on another.

Emancipation under the Soviets has reached a point where the glamour of rebellion is denied the artist. He may transform a country lane into an inclined board-walk or clothe his actors in tin trousers. These innovations are accepted by a museum or a theater and put to work as promptly as the newest hybrid lilac or azalea is accepted by the Arnold Arboretum and tested during two or three winters for its hardiness. The mani-

festoes of yesterday, cubism, vorticism, expressionism, and futurism, seemed the leaves of last autumn, overlooked by a street cleaner in the alleys of art and sent scurrying by the first winds of spring.

There are seven railroad stations in Moscow. Perhaps for that reason its critics have recognized, so much more simply and directly than elsewhere, that in art, there are as many points of departure as there are railroad terminals. What matters is not the station where the traveler starts, but the station where he descends.

III

AT the Odessa waterfront where an Italian steamer awaited its three passengers for Constantinople, a full complement of a dozen or more frontier police—the Cheka—and customs officers prepared to inspect their luggage. I had

the day before delivered to the Cheka every book, pamphlet, letter, or paper I possessed. They would be returned to me under seal on board. The remainder of my possessions, among them photographs of Meyerhold's and Tairoff's productions, and a government permit for their export, I spread out on a pile of lumber that cluttered the dock to its edge. The embargo on photographs is particularly strict. I saw a German watch his rolls of undeveloped films opened and turn a sulphurous yellow in the sunlight. But my photographs were no sooner counted than they were out of my hands and going the rounds of all the inspectors, grown suddenly as excited as though they had discovered contraband. One of them became unexpectedly voluble in excellent English and acted as interpreter. And I was interviewed in detail on every production, harried for news of every impor-

tant theater in Moscow, as though I were confronted with a dozen reporters eager to secure a "beat" for a dozen different journals on "The Russian Art Theater of Today." The duly accredited photographs were twenty. It was as many minutes before an amiable ship's officer reminded me from the rail that it was past sailing time, and drew the gangplank up after me as I clambered aboard.

As I watched brown headlands on the horizon wiped out by mid-day haze, I felt certain that had my photographs been criminal contraband, plans of a fortress, or correspondence with a monarchist pretender, the same constabulary, after summary court martial, would have shot me within twenty-four hours, strictly according to regulations. But I felt even more certain that had they found the same photographs on my dead body, they would have discussed them

just as eagerly before their rifles cooled.

The German was at my side, explaining with Teuton insistence, the immutability of Russian character. Only instinctive autocrats would dare to confront the task of ruling Russia. Communists were absolutists, enforcing Communism as a gospel. Heresy was hunted down with all the fanaticism of any militant church. Even Lenin, lying in continual state so that the faithful could forever look upon the features of their redeemer—was this not borrowed from the technique of the Russian Church that once exposed its mummified patriarchs as proof of their immortality? Was it not significant that the technique of government control continued precisely as before? The tentacles of police surveillance were everywhere, witness even my guide-books and maps and my private correspondence, waiting for me

in my cabin in an official envelope bag, closed with an official red-wax seal. Instinctive reliance on a spy system, with all its ramifications, was to these Marxist revolutionaries, fresh from exile, as natural as to the Czars; Siberia, or the more clement Crimea, as convenient a scrap-heap for political dissenters.

He was, he added, an agronome, and had been for three years the expert in charge of Nansen's experimental farms in the Ukraine. The peasants seemed eager enough to learn new methods of agriculture, but loth to change the furrows of their minds, immensely indifferent to the political upheaval except for a quiet satisfaction in new and unencumbered land to which they could tenaciously cling. Yes, the Russian instinct for the theater was indeed extraordinary. Even in remote villages they acted their crude local farces with a power of impersona-

tion that remained incredible to him. It was only the Communist agitators sent down to organize them who seemed like second-rate actors, ranting, in rehearsal, the lines of a play that would never be given. The peasant could never be assimilated by the new state. He would remain a mystic and an individualist. It was an unerring sense of this indifference that forced the Communists to limit their membership to a Spartan handful in a land of 140 million souls.

His thesis seemed to formulate one of my own. For the skin of any Russian conceals not the proverbial Tartar but an individualist and a mystic, whose soul is as real to him as his stomach, its appetites more imperious, and who realizes with equanimity that no political net, however widely cast, will yield a miraculous haul on which his soul can feed. The Soviet, having dominated the Russian people,

will in turn be imperceptibly conquered by Russian souls. The fate of Russian Communism and its German dogmas, if it is written anywhere, is written in the tent-like turrets of the Kremlin and the crenelations, shaped like swallows' tails, of its ruddy walls. They were built by two Italian architects, Antonio Marco and Pietro Solario, at the command of Ivan III. in 1495. But there is not a trace of Italy visible in them. The towers of the Kremlin are, in their complete freedom and fantasy, as Russian as the tiled turrets of St. Basil's church, twisted like turbans. The German rubrics of Marxism will sooner or later be as completely transmuted in the structure of this newest political stronghold. Our concepts of government, like our architecture, derived from Graeco-Roman models, will always have a rigid symmetry of "law and order," as unnecessary and as irrelevant to

the Russian as symmetry in his buildings. He will, I think, remain content to be ruled from citadels, knowing that his essential freedom can always be found outside their walls. The trumpets of authority sounding from the battlements will be interrupted by the echoes of faiths he has abandoned, as by ringing bells. He will continue to impersonate his dreams, while he munches chocolate wrapped in tinsel paper, copies his ancestral toys, and cherishes with the avarice of a miser and the passion of an artist the golden patterns of authority saved from the scrap-heap of his past.

1926.